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THE DEATH OF LINCOLN.

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WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

Written by request, when the funeral procession of
the martyred President passed through the streets of
New York.

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lishers of Bryant's works.)

I.

Oh, slow to smite and swift to spare,
Gentle and merciful and just!
Who, in the fear of God, didst bear
The sword of power, a nation's trust!

II.

In sorrow by thy bier we stand,
Amid the awe that hushes all,
And speak the anguish of a land
That shook with horror at thy fall.

III.

Thy task is done; the bond are free:
We bear thee to an honored grave,
Whose proudest monument shall be
The broken fetters of the slave.

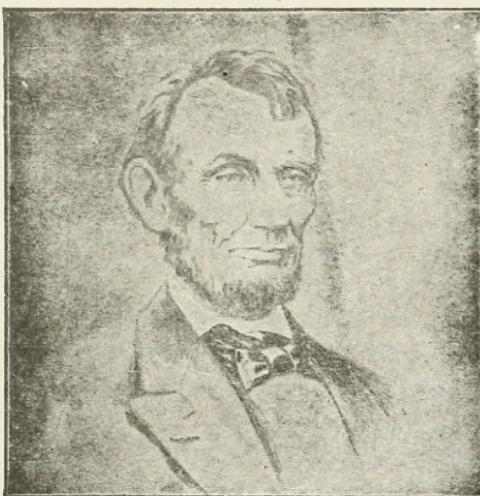
IV.

Pure was thy life; its bloody close
Hath placed thee with the sons of light,
Among the noble host of those
Who perished in the cause of Right.

NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS.

[The Roman numerals designate the stanza of the poem on which questions are based.]

The lines under the title sufficiently explain the time and occasion of this poem. After Mr. Lincoln's death on April 15, 1865, his body was carried to Springfield, Illinois, for burial. In New York, as in Philadelphia, Baltimore and other large cities, the remains were carried in the



ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

midst of a most imposing procession to the City Hall, where they lay in state for about twenty-four hours. During this time fully one hundred fifty thousand people viewed the dead president's face. A military procession of over fifteen thousand troops accompanied the body to the train that was to bear it to Illinois.

It is doubtful whether any man since Washington ever gained such a hold on the affections of all

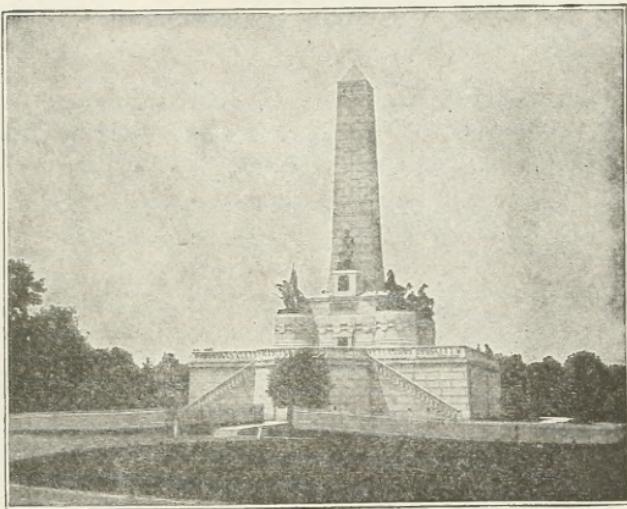
classes of people as did Mr. Lincoln; and, accordingly, none has called out so universal expressions of sorrow, of love and of reverence, expressions at once so deep in emotion and so high and dignified in tone. This simple poem of Mr. Bryant's is one of the most worthy ones. It would be well to read several, if they can be had. The passage in Lowell's Commemoration Ode, beginning "Life may be given in many ways" is perhaps the noblest. The poem by Tom Taylor, editor of the London *Punch* during the period of our civil war, is very interesting because Taylor's paper had ridiculed Mr. Lincoln mercilessly. It may be found in Bryant's Library of Poetry and Song, page 846, and in some of the school readers. Read also Edna Dean Procter's "Grave of Lincoln"; Walt Whitman's "My Captain! O my Captain". For a detailed account of the death of Mr. Lincoln and the carrying of his body to Illinois see Holland's Life of Lincoln.

I.

Line 1.—Mr. Lincoln is most noted for what trait that this line tells? Can you tell a story to show this kindness? He used to say that it rested him to spare a life or to relieve sorrow. Line 2.—He could be "just" to the point of extreme severity, when severity was necessary. This brief story shows how gentle and merciful he was:

One evening there was at the White House among the people waiting to see Mr. Lincoln an elderly woman, in a faded hood and shawl, whose face caught attention because of its sadness and patience. Presently Mr. Lincoln turned to her. "Well, my good woman, what can I do for you?" "Mr. President", said she, "my husband and three sons went into the army. My husband has been killed in battle. I get along very badly since then, and I thought I would ask you to release my oldest son to me". "Certainly, said Mr. Lincoln; "if you have given us all and your prop

has been taken away, you are justly entitled to one of your boys". He immediately made out the order to discharge the son. The mother herself took the order to her son's commander, but found that he had been wounded and taken to a hospital; she found the hospital, but her son had died. The surgeon made a note of the facts on the president's order and this the broken-hearted



LINCOLN MONUMENT, SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

mother took back to Mr. Lincoln. He was deeply affected by her appearance and her story, and said, "I know what you want and I shall do it without your asking; I shall give you back your second son". Upon this he took his pen and wrote the order. While he was writing, the poor woman stood beside him softly stroking his rough hair, as a fond mother might do. Taking the pa-

per as he handed it to her, she again placed her hand reverently on the president's head, the tears in her eyes and his, and said: "The Lord bless you, Mr. Lincoln. May you live a thousand years and always be president."

II.

You who remember the mourning for Mr. McKinley can form some idea of the grief for Mr. Lincoln, but not a very clear idea; the passions of the four years of war were so much more intense. Lowell says—

"The nation he had led
Wept with the passion of an angry grief",

The following stanzas are from Tom Taylor's poem mentioned in the notes above:

"The words of mercy were upon his lips,
Forgiveness in his heart and on his pen,
When the vile murderer brought swift eclipse
To thoughts of peace on earth, good will to men.

The Old World and the New, from sea to sea,
Utter one voice of sympathy and shame:
Sore heart, so stopped when it at last beat high;
Sad life, cut short just as its triumph came".

III.

Line 1.—What task? Mr. Lincoln wrote to Horace Greeley, "My great object is to *preserve the Union*, and not either to preserve or to destroy slavery". Which did he do?

Lines 3-4.—Find, if you can, a description of the Springfield, Illinois, monument to Lincoln. You will find a picture of it above.

Does the poet mean actual fetters of iron? What does he mean?

IV.

"Sons of light"—what does the phrase mean? Read carefully Bryant's answer in the closing two lines of the poem. Are they many or few? Are they all famous? Mr. Lincoln is called the "martyr president"; Why? What other presidents

may be called so? The word *martyr* is from a Greek word meaning *witness*. Does the title *martyr* and the last line of the poem agree? Name other "sons of light".

STORIES OF LINCOLN'S KINDNESS

The following stories, like the one above, are taken from Carpenter's "Six Months at the White House":

"On one occasion Mr. Thaddeus Stevens called at the White House with an elderly lady, in great trouble, whose son had been in the army, but for some offence had been court-martialed and sentenced either to death, or imprisonment. After a full hearing, the president said to Mr. Stevens, 'Do you think this is a case which will warrant my interference?' 'With my knowledge of the facts and the parties', was the reply, 'I should have no hesitation in granting a pardon'. 'Then', returned Mr. Lincoln, 'I will pardon him'. The gratitude of the mother was too deep for expression, and not a word was said between her and Mr. Stevens until they were half way down the stairs on their passage out, when she suddenly broke forth in an excited manner with the words, 'I knew it was a copperhead lie!' 'What do you refer to, madam?' asked Mr. Stevens. 'Why, they told me he was an ugly looking man', she replied. 'He is the handsomest man I ever saw in my life!' And surely for that mother, and for many another throughout the land, no carved statue of ancient or modern art can have the charm which will forevermore encircle that care-worn but gentle face, expressing as features of ruler never expressed before, 'Malice towards none—Charity for all'".

* * *

"Old Daniel, the negro door-keeper, gave me

a touching illustration of this element of his character. A poor woman from Philadelphia had been waiting with a baby in her arms for several days to see the president. It appeared by her story, that her husband had furnished a substitute for the army, but sometime afterward in a state of intoxication, was induced to enlist. Upon reaching the post assigned to his regiment, he deserted, thinking the government was not entitled to his services. Returning home, he was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to be shot. The sentence was to be executed on a Saturday. On Monday his wife left her home with her baby, to endeavor to see the president. Said Daniel, "She had been waiting here three days, and there was no chance for her to get in. Late in the afternoon of the third day, the president was going through the passage to his private room to get a cup of tea. On the way he heard the baby cry. He instantly went back to his office and rang the bell. 'Daniel', said he, 'is there a woman with a baby in the anteroom?' I said there was, and if he would allow me to say it, it was a case he ought to see; for it was a matter of life and death. Said he, 'send her to me at once'. She went in, told her story, and the president pardoned her husband. As the woman came out from his presence, her eyes were lifted and her lips moving in prayer, the tears streaming down her cheeks." Said Daniel, "I went up to her, and pulling her shawl said, 'Madam, it was the baby that did it'".

BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT,

By Thomas Arkle Clark, of the University of Illinois, contains 40 pages bound in manilla cover. Nineteen page biography, seven poems and four illustrations, including large picture of Bryant. Price 10 cents a copy postpaid. Five or more copies to one address only cents a copy.

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